

"The vessel of the Government did not enter upon the session of 1895 in a very seaworthy condition. The captain had failed to fulfil the high expectations entertained of his attractive but indeterminate character, the chief lieutenant was hardly on speaking terms with him, the crew were torn with dissensions there was profound disagreement on the line of policy that should be put before the country, and though the budget had been a dazzling success, it did not serve to cover the general sense of failure and disintegration. It was obvious that whenever the election came, the Liberal ship would founder."

It did founder. In the years between this and the outbreak of the South African War, the Webb-Shaw call looked more and more like justifying itself. Lord Rosebery was in a rather sulky retirement, the Opposition was divided into three wings—the Liberal Imperialists, who still attached their colours to his mast, the followers of Harcourt, and those of Morley. By 1898, the internal wrangles had reached a pitch which compelled first Harcourt and then Morley to resign. "A party rent by sectional disputes and personal interests," wrote Harcourt to Morley, "is one which no man can consent to lead either with credit to himself or advantage to the country." Liberalism, in these dark years, certainly appeared to be going out of business.

Meantime, the 1893 ^{ca} had ^a_i almost at once, a practical result. At Bradford, in the later part of that same year, the Independent Labour Party had been founded by Keir Hardie and the I L P was, from the start, expressly dedicated to bringing the Trade Unions into politics, and

getting them to form a party whose
determining policy
was Socialism As yet, the Unions stood aloof
the I L P
was a party formed by individuals, although
the Fabian
Society co-operated in bringing it into life, in so
far as
representatives of it attended the Foundation
Conference
at Bradford Sidney Webb, however, was not
one of them
Of course, part of the explanation may be
that he was